

Dear Members of the Housing Committee,

My name is Christine Feely, and I live in West Hartford. I am writing in support of Senate Bill 4, which will improve housing stability for renters, remediate safety issues in rental buildings, increase the use of clean and renewable energy, and make buildings more energy efficient in low-income and Environmental Justice communities.

High home prices keep many people from becoming homeowners, yet high rents, poor controls on rent increases, and poor controls on evictions have all contributed to instability in housing for Connecticut residents. Stable living arrangements help all of us have stable and productive lives. We all know how stressful moving can be, even when those moves are infrequent and carefully planned. Frequent and erratically timed increases in rent, such as increasing rent in the first year of a tenancy or during a public health emergency may cause a renter to move, with costs of two moves in a short time period, and they may involve changes in schools for their children and longer commutes to jobs. All these realities involve mental and emotional costs that can accompany the financial costs. Frequent moves are particularly hard on children and can make it hard for them to learn to their potential and advance to the next grade level. Financial and time costs of frequent moves may also contribute to child neglect, as parents scramble to find suitable housing, pack, move, unpack, and find new schools.

Senate Bill 4 can contribute to more stability in housing through limits on rent increases and by linking allowable rent increases to the Consumer Price Index, as well as provisions for advance notice of rent increases and no rent increases during a public health emergency. That's a significant benefit, and on top of that Senate Bill 4 includes very important provisions for grants for retrofitting of multifamily residences that were built before 1980 in environmental justice communities. These types of changes or upgrades include installation of heat pumps, solar power generating systems, improved roofing, storm doors and windows, and improved insulation. These changes can reduce utility bills and improve air quality in these neighborhoods. Other upgrades can address safety and health concerns by remediating mold, vermiculite, asbestos, lead, and radon problems. In addition, the grants will prioritize awarding grants that benefit low-income residents, veterans, victims of domestic violence, and homeless individuals.

Taken together, the provisions of Senate Bill 4 will improve housing and housing arrangements for many people in low-income and Environmental Justice communities, which will allow more Connecticut residents to have stable lives, cleaner environments, and be more productive. I strongly urge you to support it.

Sincerely,
Christine Feely